

Photos: Steve Jones

# Top of the Vee

## Formula Vee is still relevant says ex-champ Ian Flux

by Chris Hough  
editorial assistant



**A**s a cost-effective route into single-seater racing, Formula Vee is often overlooked. Formula Ford is the route many young and more experienced drivers take, whether it is in the national championship or one of the regional contests.

But for Ian Flux, Formula Vee is the only way to go. Flux won the championship in 1975 and made a return to the wheel of a Formula Vee at the 40th anniversary event at Brands Hatch recently. Even now he still believes it is the best way for young drivers to get into racing.

He explains: "Some people regard it as a poor relation to other similar single-seater championships, but it teaches young drivers everything they need to know."

Flux made his debut in the championship in 1974 on a part-time basis. He competed in the championship in a Scarab, which he built with help from his dad and mechanic Bert Pulland. His determination to begin racing was clear from the start. The build of the car only lasted for the first three months of 1974 and the car was ready for Flux to make his championship debut at Castle Combe.

In 1974 Flux was working as a truck driver for Formula One

team Token, so he missed many Formula Vee race weekends. But even in that season he made eight starts, and the results inspired him to return to the championship in 1975.

"Work came first," explains Flux. "Even so, we still managed a few second- and third-place finishes that year."

In 1975, Flux was able to balance his work and his racing and completed an entire season of Formula Vee. However, he had to scratch around for the budget to keep going.

"To complete the season I needed to find the budget. Mum and dad had paid out £2000 and they said 'no more'. Shell gave me £1500. Oakley Construction also gave me some money. But I had to tell them I was a bit better than I actually was to secure the money!"

Flux soon backed up his sales patter with solid results. He won 12 out of the 14 races that season and took the title. Despite having more funding than ever before, his racing was still relatively low-budget.

Flux says: "I had a VW camper van and a trailer and I used to drive to every event with my dad. We would sleep in the van at places like Croft, Cadwell Park and Aintree."

"We never had the chance to test either, because of work. We used to leave home on Saturday as soon as I'd finished work."

But competing in Formula Vee on a budget did have its advantages for Flux, as he

### FORMULA VEE TECH SPEC

**Engine:** 1300cc air-cooled VW Type 1/2/3  
**BHP:** 85  
**Top speed:** 100mph  
**Weight:** Minimum without driver 375kgs, with driver 465kgs  
**Suspension:** Front is VW axle, hubs, stub axles and torsion bar. Rear made up of VW parts  
**Brakes:** VW Beetle discs on the front with VW drums on the rear  
**Tyres:** Dunlop control tyre  
**Gearbox:** VW Type 1 gearbox must be used

explains: "The prize money was very good back then. It was better than Formula Ford, which is one of the reasons I did Vee. In 1975, I had a budget of £3000, but I won £4500. It was a bit of a shock when I moved on and realised you couldn't make a profit in every series."

As well as winning the title and making an unexpected profit, the 18-year-old Flux learnt valuable lessons about racing: "It was fun driving in those days. I was the youngest by about ten years and racing against experienced drivers taught me racecraft."

"I realised how different it was racing against other young drivers when I moved into

Formula Three. In my first race at Oulton Park I got in the way of Rupert Keegan and he hit my back wheel."

Despite enjoying his time in Formula Vee immensely, Flux believes that the championship today is a big improvement compared to when he started: "In the UK championship there are 40 cars and it is a grid full of young drivers. It is value-for-money in Formula Vee and it teaches the drivers good racecraft. But the biggest difference is with the cars: they are much more sensitive to tuning and the drivers can learn about car set-up."

Formula Vee has also remained a low-budget formula, whereas costs in other series

have risen sharply.

It is possible to race in Vee for as little as £8000, with the initial purchase of a car costing about the same amount. Flux believes that with Formula Vee being so cost-effective, it is attracting drivers who could easily compete at a higher level.



Formula Vee budgets are as little as £6000 for a year

**"It's come on in leaps and bounds"**  
**Ian Flux**

### Ian Flux scoops British FV series

IT WAS Formula Vee that started it all off and although it has rather faded from the scene with the success of the more exciting and profitable Super Vee formula, the original coupe still carries on.



FLUX: prevailing The British FV championship this year was won by the 18-year-old Flux

I was lined up at the front of the grid for the Formula Vee parade and in my mirrors I could see Tim Flynn's old car. And from looking in the mirrors, a lot of old memories came back."

But despite having such good memories of driving the old car, Flux was very impressed with the new Formula Vee



Flux: rolling back the years

car. On his return to Formula Vee in a modern car prepared by GAC, Flux finished second overall in the Allcomers race. Despite not winning, he relished being back in the car.

"The biggest difference with the new car is the engine. In the old Vee we probably had about 50bhp but the new car has 85bhp. It also seems a lot safer. When I raced in Vee the fuel tank was underneath my legs. But now it has been moved and made much safer. Even the overalls are safer now. I don't think my old ones would have stood up to a match."

"There were 46 of us in the Allcomers race at Brands Hatch, so they needed two heats for qualifying," Flux continues. "I was fifth in my heat, but three cars in front of us were from Germany. Over there they run on slicks and have wings, so they have a half a second advantage per lap."

Patrick Sherrington won the final in a German Formula Vee car, but it didn't dampen Flux's enthusiasm.

"A lot of drivers, me included, are still racing the cars because we love racing. I actually enjoyed racing in the Vee as much as I do driving the GT car [Flux usually drives a Mosler MT900R in the British GT series]. It was a massive satisfaction ending up second overall."

Flux has now raced in the last two Formula Vee anniversaries and he has already sorted out his next drive in the car.

"If my Zimmer frame gets me there, I'll be back for the 50th anniversary," he says. "I've been second for the past two anniversaries at Brands Hatch so I want to win the next one." ■



Things were very different back in 1975



Ian Flux stormed through to second in the Formula Vee Allcomers race at Brands